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Publisher & Senior Editor - Joseph Roberts
Comptroller - Rajesh Chawla
Managing Editor - Sonya Weir
Production Management - Peru Blue Sky

Contributors:
Robert Alstead, Alan Cassels, Guy Dauncey, Adrien Dilon, Ishi Dinim, Paul Gossen, Carolyn Herriot, Vesanto Melina, Faisal Moola, Geoff Olson, Gwen Randall-Young, Joseph Roberts, David Suzuki, Eckhart Tolle, Nancy Whitney-Reiter

Sales - Head office 604-733-2215
toll-free 1-800-365-8897

Contact Common Ground:
Phone: **604-733-2215**
Fax: 604-733-4415
Advertising: admin@commonground.ca
Editorial: editor@commonground.ca

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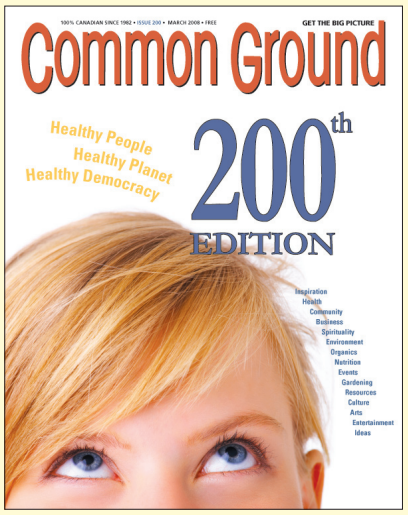

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EDITOR'S LETTER

200 Editions 200 adventures

Let's clarify a few claims on our cover. "100% Canadian Since 1982" is easy to understand; our magazine and website are owned and operated by Canadians, for the benefit of Canadians.

But what about the other tag line "Get the Big Picture"? We feel that the real "Big Picture" can only be perceived in a climate of honesty, transparency and a desire to know and speak the truth. This holds equally true for love and peace as it does for indifference and war. So we ask questions and search for answers not underwritten by big Pharma, religion or government.

We are independent media and our readers appreciate our out of the box, creative, eclectic approach to discovering and celebrating what is really going on. We are not owned by the corporations that control the majority of media's newspapers, radio, magazines and TV. If the government lies about WMD, we say so. If Health Canada makes a dumb move that will eliminate natural health products, we point it out.

Over the last 26 years, people have said many wonderful things about *Common Ground* (CG), lauding the magazine for taking on issues most other media ignores or obfuscates. "The Big Picture" evolves from connecting as many dots as possible to foster healthy people on a healthy planet. Distraction divides. Attention unites. Conversation and dialogue creates relationship, which nourishes spiritual growth, healthy communities and social justice.

CG embodies many interests, much as our readers do. To honour and protect the integrity of Canada, we begin by honouring and protecting ourselves. Twenty years ago, Robert Bly prophesized that, in 10 years, parents would have to protect their children from TV's violence. Well, we arrived at that point a decade ago and now there are other forms of entertaining ourselves to death, including death culture, violent video games.

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continued p.15...

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INSPIRATION

Unplugged

disconnecting from the rat race

by Nancy Whitney-Reiter

When I left my job at a Fortune 500 company to embark upon a year-long international travel sabbatical, I thought my dilemma was unique. Why was I not satisfied with a life that, by all standards, was successful? True, as a 9/11 survivor I had more reason than most to reconsider my life and how I wanted to spend the rest of it. As it turns out, however, I was not alone.

While most of my coworkers and friends were exclaiming, "I wish I could do what you're doing," plenty of others of all ages were packing their bags. I met several of them in my travels, which took me from Central America to Africa, to various cities in the US, and finally to northern Arizona, where I now reside.

There is no doubt that many in our modern society are in the midst of an existential crisis. The tremendous success of books such as Po Bronson's *What Should I Do With My Life?* memoirs such as Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love* and the resurgence of Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* exemplify the inner struggle faced by many working professionals today. The ideals of previous generations have gradually eroded, leaving nothing to fill the vacuum they created. Corporate loyalty is virtually nonexistent; gold watches have been supplanted by pink slips, as downsizing and outsourcing have become a daily fact of life. Going to college has become an expectation in its own right. Students are pressured, while just beginning high school, to think about their college careers, rather than nurtured or encouraged to think about who they *are* and who they want to *become*.

In addition, with the advent of globalization and the Internet frontier, the choices for what to do with one's life are limitless. The result of this is an entire generation that has rushed into life without a clear purpose (Generation X), a generation that finds itself with the rug pulled out from under it (Baby Boomers) and a new generation that is starting to burn out at a faster rate than ever before (Generation Y).

Whichever fork of the path to adulthood you've travelled, it's possible that you are now facing a problem. Nowhere in this period of becoming an adult have you had the time to devote to exploring yourself: what makes you happy, what you're truly good at, what brings you the greatest satisfaction. Instead, our generations have been force-fed a constant stream of consumer driven goals that are based on nothing more concrete than a marketer's latest scheme.

We've been programmed since birth to believe that our needs are greater than they actually are – that latest toy, car or electronic gadget is a must-have – only to be told, "That's so five minutes ago" soon after we acquire it. The moment something better comes along, we are no longer satisfied by what we have. We give absolutely no thought to this pattern and become seduced each time by the next best thing. This trend is hardly new to Generations X or Y. Observers of this facet of human nature can be traced all the way back to Aristotle, who wrote, "The avarice of mankind is insatiable."

What is alarming is that the pace of this cycle, from coveting to rejecting, is speeding up. In addition, this mentality is spreading to areas other than consumer goods; it has become evident in our personal relationships, our spiritual beliefs and our jobs.

It's too hard to change careers; it's simpler just to change companies. It's too hard to make a struggling relationship work; it's easier to find a new mate. It's too hard to self examine and develop one's own spiritual beliefs, it's simpler to follow the latest fads. We are breeding a generation of contradictions: we have virtually limitless choices, but no one to tell us which ones to follow.

The answer, of course, is that it is not up to anyone else to tell us what to be. The answer involves finding this out for ourselves, which is nearly impossible to do with the frenetic pace we have set for ourselves. One of the greatest ironies of our work ethic and culture is that we work so hard to be able to afford a nice place to live, nice furniture, neat gadgets, expensive home entertainment and exercise equipment and then watch it collect dust as we spend more and more time at work, in an effort to afford more things that we won't have the time to use or enjoy!

Unplugging from the matrix

In the film *The Matrix*, there is a point when the protagonist, Neo, is told that he can see things as they really are or he can go back without discovering reality. Once he sees the truth, however, he won't be able to go back to his old life. Ever. The same will be true for you. Once you unplug from our distraction packed, consumption driven matrix, you won't go back. The difference here is that you won't want to. Once you take the time to truly find yourself and what makes you happy, you'll never want to go back to the artificial world that most of the rest of the population is operating in. You won't need to move from relationship to relationship, from job to

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Where and how long?

Where should I go, and for how long? The answers to these questions depend largely on how well you want to get to know yourself. Are you someone who, like me, has never really known themselves? Anything shorter than three months would be a gross disservice, merely another band-aid approach. The ideal time period for this deep of an inward journey is six months to one year. On the other hand, if you are someone who has merely lost touch with your true self due to outside distractions, anywhere from two solid weeks to a month may be all that it takes. The key, of course, lies in the destination.

It is extremely important to choose a destination that is completely foreign to you, although by foreign I do not necessarily mean out of the county. If you are a city slicker, perhaps some time spent on a dude ranch would be sufficient. I chose to call my book *Unplugged* because the more we stay connected to our existing matrix of consumer driven ideals the harder it is to truly spend time in inner reflection.

Your location should also meet another important criterion: it should be more natural than digital. Your daily surroundings should enable you to hear the sound of birds more than cars, of the ocean more than planes, or perhaps just plain silence. In addition, access to the Internet, cell phones and television should be very limited.

The high wire vs. the safety net

Okay, so you've decided you're going to do it. You've revved up your courage, picked a destination and notified your friends and family. Telling others is the first step to full commitment. If you're like most people, you also have someone else you need to inform about your decision – your employer. What happens next will have a tremendous impact on your life from this point forward so be sure to fully consider all of the implications of this decision.

You basically have two choices: give notice and quit your job or request some type of sanctioned leave of absence (such as a formal sabbatical). Even if you choose the latter, you could be facing a minefield so it's important to handle your application properly.

Unplugging on your own versus a sanctioned leave of absence depends primarily on how much you actually enjoy what you currently do (irrespective of your current boss). Not everyone wishing to unplug is doing so because they dislike their career. That said, if you generally enjoy what you do, but just need some time away for self development, then you should definitely consider researching your company's policy on leaves of absence. Keep in mind that even companies with fairly liberal policies will expect something from you in return – usually a commitment of at least one year. If you love what you do, great! If you hate it, your time away will pretty much be in vain since the entire experience will be clouded by your impending return to something you are dreading.

If you decide to quit your job

If you've decided to go it alone, you need to be very careful about how you actually do it. In fact, no matter how much you dislike your present employer, it's *not* advisable to tell your boss to "take this job and shove it." More realistically, you need to decide how you're going to give notice and how much notice to give.

The goal here is to leave on the best possible terms without compromising your own financial security. It is advisable not to give notice unless and until you are in a financial position to do so. Depending on your relationship with your boss, the relative uniqueness of your duties and talents, and even the mood your boss wakes up in that day, you could find yourself suddenly not having to report to work the next day. Make sure that when that moment comes, you are ready to meet your obligations and still embark on your journey with a reduced level of stress.

Applying for a sabbatical

Most companies offering sabbaticals have some type of hierarchy in place when it comes to granting them. While a company's only *stated* requirement may be the length of time you have been employed, the reality of the decision-making process may be a bit more convoluted.

Corporations are unlikely to grant sabbaticals to poor performers; an exception could be a top performer who has experienced some personal setbacks. In this case, the employer might even be pushing you to take advantage of its program, with the hope of garnering a significant return on its investment. Likewise, those who are not viewed as team players will also find their chances greatly diminished.

And finally…

Unplugging is a journey you must undertake by yourself, but you will not be alone. Once you disconnect from your artificial world, you will encounter many others on this same quest. You will have new experiences, learn new skills, be enlightened by different philosophies and make new friends. You will also get to know a fascinating, unique and worthwhile individual – your true self.

Excerpted from Unplugged: How to Disconnect from the Rat Race, Have an Existential Crisis, and Find Meaning and Fulfillment *by Nancy Whitney-Reiter, Sentient Publications May 25 release.*

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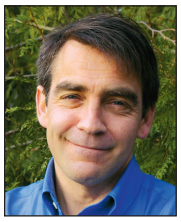

HEALTH

Statins awful side effects

DRUG BUST *Alan Cassels*

My office phone rings and a man on the line asks, "Are you the guy who writes about pharmaceutical stuff? Didn't I just hear you on *CBC*?"

"Yup, that's probably me," I say.

And like an old sailor at the start of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, who latches on to a guest at the door to a wedding feast, he doesn't pause as he launches in to his story: "My doctor told me I've got high cholesterol and put me on Lipitor right away…"

"And then what happened?" I ask.

"I got these muscle pains all over the place. My legs, my arms. It was awful. I felt weak, could barely walk, felt like crap…"

"Then what?"

"Well then I went back to my doctor and asked him if feeling all weak like this is because of the drug."

"And he said he'd never heard anything like that, before, right?" I ask.

"How did you know?" he yelps. "How did you know?"

"Now tell me how your story ends," I say. "Did your doctor change your dose, switch you to another cholesterol lowering drug like Crestor or Zocor or just tell you to live with it?"

"My gosh, for me he did all three. First, he put me on a different dose and then I still felt like crap so he switched me to that other one. When the muscle pain didn't go away, I begged to stop taking it, but he refused to believe it could be the drug." He pauses to catch his breath. "I'm amazed you knew," he adds. "How could you know what happened?"

Ever hear a story so many times it starts to feel like the truth?

This story has been repeated to me – with only a few variations – so often I feel like I know the plot and scenes by heart, and I'm no longer surprised by the main actor's fatal flaws.

If you are one of the three million Canadians swallowing a cholesterol lowering, or "statin" drug (a drug like Lipitor, Zocor or Crestor) every day, you may be familiar with the storyline too. And if your family members haven't yet been targeted for chemical alteration of their cholesterol, stay tuned for a compelling and instructive tale.

But what does this parable mean? What can we say about a poor patient who takes a drug, a treatment, which hangs like an albatross around his neck?

First of all, literary allusions aside, while you wouldn't take a drug because some old sea dog told you "it worked great for me," you also shouldn't refuse to take a drug because he said it made him feel like hell.

Let's explore the world of statin side effect denial a bit deeper, shall we? While many people won't have any problem taking statins, others will experience terrible, sometimes intolerable, adverse effects. And, naturally, they will want to stop taking them.

In fact, the most common thing about statins is that if you're an average person, you won't take them for long. The Heart Protection Study, one of the largest cholesterol-lowering drug trials ever conducted, showed that more than a third of the patients who took a statin for *only* six weeks quit the trial. Why? The published research holds no answers, but I suspect it's because the patients couldn't tolerate the drug. In the real world, the statin drop-out rate is huge; one study found that a third of patients quit their statin within a year and within two years two-thirds of patients will quit. Basically, if you tell your doctor that it's "normal" to quit taking your cholesterol-lowering drug, there's a big body of research to back you up.

The muscle weakening that people keep phoning me about is probably the most well known of all the adverse effects of the statins. Back in 2005, even Health Canada recognized this problem and sent out an advisory telling all statin manufacturers to update their safety information about the risks of rhabdomyolysis (the medical term for the muscle weakening thing). Other unpleasant side effects your doctor may not have heard about include sleep disturbances, sexual dysfunction, depression, confusion, short-term or "working" memory loss and transient global amnesia.

Is it possible that people experience adverse effects related to statins far more commonly than our doctors currently think? I think it's highly plausible, especially given the troubling fact that the medical journals don't publish balanced information covering the statins' adverse events. This is a jaw-dropping bit of trivia, but of the 14 major statin trials to date, only two have ever reported the full data set on the serious adverse

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effects linked to the drug. This is a form of publication bias, which, among other things, might explain why our physicians find it hard to believe that many of their statin-swallowing patients are actually being harmed.

While people may take statins ostensibly to prevent heart attacks and strokes, the percentage of people who actually see any benefit is astonishingly small. One of the biggest scandals going, in my estimation, is that statins are the largest selling drug class on the planet and at least half the patients swallowing a statin every day are women. For an otherwise healthy woman with high cholesterol, there is good evidence that statins will not help her, whatsoever. So we've got a situation where women are subjecting themselves to potential muscle pain, confusion and memory loss, when they stand a zero chance of benefiting from the drug. That's scandalous.

I'm not alone in my alarm about the questionable benefits and the serious concerns related to the safety of statins; I've noticed that mainstream media is starting to get the picture too. In its January 18 edition, *BusinessWeek* magazine featured a lengthy article on statins entitled "Do Cholesterol Drugs Do Any Good?" The bottom line is that most people who take these drugs, especially women, derive no benefit from them.

In terms of scholarly research on this topic, Women and Health Protection (www.whp-apsf.ca/) provides one of the best papers to come out on this subject: Evidence for Caution: Women and Statin Use. (You can order copies of the paper by contacting the Canadian Women's Health Network at cwhn@cwhn.ca)

In every story there is a villain, someone to blame. So who is responsible for the growing numbers of statin-injured patients and their doctors who seem unable or unwilling to question the drugs? In drug controversies, people typically point to one of three villains: the drug companies, the regulator (Health Canada or the FDA), also known as the "system," or the doctors and patients. Let's examine these.

Some argue that the drug companies are businesses and that worrying people about the side effects of their drugs is a direct threat to profits. Don't expect drug companies to give the full picture about their drugs. Others say we should not blame the companies, but the "system," the regulators who regulate the production and sale of pharmaceuticals. Our "system," as we know it, accepts the research that the drug companies produce about their drugs and then gives them a licence to sell their drugs based on that clinical research. Since taxpayers don't really invest in studying the statins directly, we take the companies' word on their safety.

The third theory is the *caveat emptor* or buyer beware argument. It assumes that the companies produce drugs which, more or less, have some kind of beneficial effect and that they are regulated by the "system," so at the end of the day, the physicians and patients must determine if a drug is right for a particular person.

I don't usually get swept up in those arguments, because most of them are moot. We get the companies and the systems we collectively create. The system of manufacturing and licensing drugs is a human creation and if we want a different system, we have to work to create it. But until that revolution occurs, people still need to know everything they can about a drug before they put it in their mouths.

One of the biggest scandals going, in my estimation, is that statins are the largest selling drug class on the planet and at least half the patients swallowing a statin every day are women.

It is sad that the stories of the statin-injured storyteller are taking so long to filter through to the public, but that story, like any weighty parable, is worth listening to, repeatedly.

Perhaps the statin storyteller possesses one deep and fatal flaw: He trusts too much. He trusts the drug companies, even when they bury negative information. He trusts the regulators, who deliver infrequent and lame warnings that most people easily ignore, and, ultimately, he trusts his doctor, but with nearly $5 billion per year spent on marketing drugs to doctors, it is difficult even for the doctor to get objective information about statins.

For me, it is the stories told by the people taking the drugs who phone me out of the blue that are the most compelling; not the information coming from the sellers, regulators or prescribers.

I have listened to statin-injured people who will never be able to trust a physician again and that's a shame because physicians are also victims of statin propaganda. The stories of real people being hurt by the drugs they are prescribed by their well-meaning physicians contain narratives too compelling to ignore.

I, too, am hypnotized and will continue to listen to these tales I've heard so many times.

Alan Cassels is a pharmaceutical policy researcher at the University of Victoria and a frequent commentator on prescription drug issues.

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NUTRISPEAK Vesanto Melina MS, RD

Guilt is the gift that keeps on giving. – Irma Bombeck

Do you feel guilty? No, that's too mild. Let's put it another way. *Are* you guilty? I'll bet a lot of you answered a big resounding "Yes." It just came automatically. But what, exactly, are you guilty of? In case the list that immediately formed in your mind isn't long enough, here are a few points you might add.

1. You just ate a huge piece of chocolate cake, even though you had resolved never to do that again.

2. You know that you ought to join AA, but you can't bring yourself to admit to your problem in a church basement full of people. (Plus, there's that higher power thing.)

3. Heart disease (or breast or colon cancer, or diabetes) runs in your family, but you have hardly cut a morsel of fat out of your diet.

4. You are exhausted from work, plus caring for a family, and rarely have the energy left to assemble decent school lunches for your kids.

5. You never got to the gym all week.

6. You haven't gotten to the gym yet this year (despite having a membership).

7. You bought discounted products that were a real bargain even though you know if you looked at their labels they'd contain awful ingredients – cookies loaded with transfats, shampoo full of slaughterhouse by-products and chips with a fat content that's over the moon.

8. You know that if you tried on your bathing suit, the bulges of flab would be even bigger than they were last year.

9. You've heard that the best step to reduce global warming is to cut animal products from your diet, but you can't bear to eliminate bacon or cheese pizza.

10. You know that wheat brings on allergic reactions, but sometimes you want it anyway – or it might be coffee, dairy or sugar.

When I consult with my nutrition clients, I am often surprised by the myriad ways in which we make ourselves feel guilty. We expect superhuman achievements. We drive ourselves so hard. Where does all this guilt get us?

Aren't you parenting as well as you can manage right now, considering all the conflicting pulls on your time and energy? Aren't you beginning to accomplish a few shifts in your habits? Although you haven't checked off every item on your imaginary to-do list, didn't you, in fact, recently perform several kind acts?

Can you release a little of the pressure to be so darn prefect? When you look back to five years ago, you may see that you've come a long way in achieving valuable goals. It's worth taking a moment to pat yourself on the back, take a deep breath and smile. You aren't doing so badly, after all.

Vesanto Melina is a dietitian and author of nutrition classics Becoming Vegetarian, Becoming Vegan, Raising Vegetarian Children *and the* Food Allergy Survival Guide. *She offers personal consultations from Langley or (during April) in Vancouver. 604-882-6782, www.nutrispeak.com*

Give guilt the shake

As it turns out, guilt is not such an effective motivator of good behaviour. It may even make you resist exercise and eat more bad stuff, leading to more pounds. It's better to get on with enjoying life and simply do your best. Perhaps you won't drop the guilt habit overnight, but there comes a time when you have to say "Enough!" Give yourself credit. Take pride in what you are able to accomplish. Meanwhile, here's a recipe that's pretty much guilt-free.

Quick Chocolate Shake

If you have leftover bananas, you may freeze them; ripe bananas are especially sweet. Peel them, leave whole or break into chunks. Place in plastic bags or containers and freeze. A sprinkling of fresh lemon juice will keep them from turning brown.

1 peeled banana, fresh or frozen
10 ml (2 tsp) cocoa powder (or to taste)
175 ml (3/4 cup) fortified soymilk or rice milk

Place banana, cocoa and milk in a blender and process until smooth. Makes 300 ml (1 ¼ cups).

Nutritional analysis using fortified vanilla soymilk: calories: 175; protein: 7 g; fat: 3 g; carbohydrate: 35 g; dietary fibre: 4 g; calcium: 222 mg; iron: 1 mg; magnesium: 52 mg; zinc: 1.8 mg; vitamin B12: 2.3 mcg.

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R U an Addict?

by Paul Gossen

Email has replaced Starbucks as the number one white-collar addiction

How many times per day do you check your email? In the world today, we check our email an average of 23 times per day, debilitating our ability to think clearly and be focused. Email has become the default communications channel of the 21st century. It is a quick way to stay in touch with lots of people and solves the problem of voicemail tag. However, there is a growing awareness of the dark side of email.

In a recent Symantec survey of email users in Europe, 74 percent of people said they think email is addictive and 21 percent admitted to being email dependent – compulsively checking their email and panicking when they can't**.**

Constant email users suffer a 10-point drop in IQ scores, more than twice the drop recorded by heavy marijuana users. This clinical trial by HP and the University of London, involving more than a thousand participants, found that email addicts developed an inability to distinguish between trivial and important messages. Twenty percent of participants consistently jeopardized important relationships by "checking their messages" in the middle of a conversation. Consider that email addiction is killing your ability to think clearly and be present with important people in your life.

Constantly checking your email is a great way to stay busy. If you check your email more than five times a day, consider that you may be addicted to email. The problem with constantly checking your email is that you train people to believe you are instantly available via email. You then have to check your email constantly in order to appear responsive. Unfortunately, constantly checking your email usually has very little to do with producing results and getting what you want in life.

Email cannot transmit a speaking tone. Speaking tone is how humans relate to other humans and connect with community. Tone is how humans communicate emotion and a powerful conversation always has an emotional element. You cannot create relationship nor have real conversations concerning accountability without tone. As you read or write text, you imagine or *assume* an emotional tone into the text. From email arguments to billion dollar cost overruns to real wars, *assuming* the emotional state of another person or group is always at the heart of every conflict.

If you spend more than two hours per day in email land, you may be attempting to substitute email for real conversations. Writing is slow. Explaining your point of view or justifying a decision via email requires you to compose text. Wanting to look good requires that the text be well edited. Producing results requires real, open communication, the kind of connection that happens in face-to-face or telephone conversations. According to a 2007 study published in *Psychology Today*, telephone communication has four times the success rate of email communication.

What do you want out of life? What changes would you like to see in the world? Are you really willing to give all that up to service your email habits? Building healthy email habits is actually very easy.

The email rehab program

Tell the truth: What are your email patterns? How much time do you spend per day in email land? What is the cost of email addiction on your ability to think clearly and be present to important people in your life?

Acknowledge the impact on others: If you are really committed to altering you relationship with email, "fessing up" with others on the cost of your habit will give you the power and support to change.

Response time: Rescind your promise to be instantly available via email. Negotiate a more realistic email response time with your key people, such as a same-day promise.

No urgent email: Set up agreements not to use email for urgent communications or for matters best discussed in person or on the phone.

Action required: Immediately mark or separate "For Your Info" from "Action Required" email. Deal with your "For Your Info" email all at once at a later time.

Time block email: Schedule two or three time blocks (15-45 minutes long) to check email and respond to "Action Required" email.

Think before responding: Anything that can't be completed in your set email time, estimate how long it will take and see where it will fit into your schedule.

Stay strong: Only check your email during your email time. The trick to breaking an addiction is to displace the bad habit with a good habit. If you catch yourself checking email, stop.

Pick up the phone: Email is the perfect tool to schedule powerful telephone or face-to-face conversations. Remember the telephone is four times as effective at achieving real communication.

Use email – don't let email use you: Change the default settings in your email program to check for new mail once an hour instead of every few minutes. Try unplugging your email and see how much more focused you become.

Adapted from the book Business Transformed *by Paul Gossen. His one-day program* Productivity Transformed *includes a fresh new relationship with email.*

***Program date**: Vancouver:March 26. 604-872-4300. An* End Email Addiction *PDF eBook is available from www.BusinessTransformed.com*

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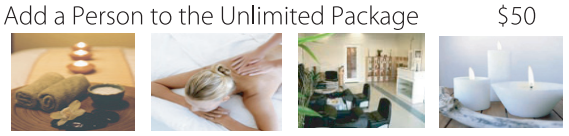

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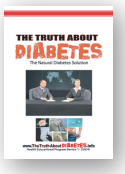

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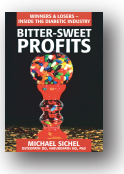

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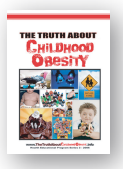

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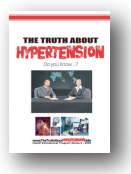

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...continued from p. 4

them precursors to great annual health and environment shows that are so popular today.

Common Ground was the first magazine to review Eckhart Tolle's astonishing book *The Power of Now* so it's truly thrilling to see Oprah's Book of the Month Club featuring Eckhart Tolle and his new book *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* this month. Oprah's 10-week, interactive, worldwide web event begins March 3; register at www.Oprah.com/anewearth

A New Earth is a profound guide for creating a better way of living and a better world to live in. At the core of the teachings lies the transformation of consciousness, a spiritual awakening that Eckhart Tolle sees as the next step in human evolution. This is a prerequisite not only to achieve personal happiness, but also to end the violent conflict endemic on our planet. Visit eckharttolle.com

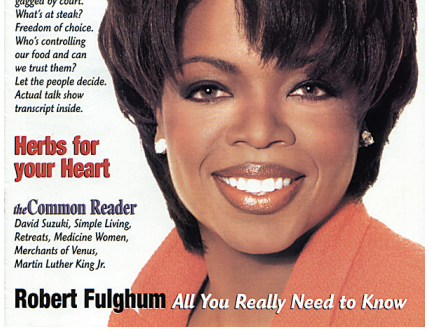
We invite you to take a journey through *Common Ground's* history; simply click on "Archives" at the top of our homepage, select a year, view the covers and select one to virtually visit that month.

Every edition of *Common Ground* has been an adventure with a unique theme evolving out of the very stuff of life … the spirit of the times, focusing on issues that inform and inspire. We have published 200 editions and still have many new projects on the go; for example, rumour has it that a federal election is coming. Given that we would like to know which politicians we can trust, we are inviting the leaders of federal parties into a conversation with *Common Ground* so CG readers get a better sense of who they are as individuals and how they plan to lead Canada and spend our tax money. We will publish the first interview in our next issue.

We believe a more open dialogue with our elected representatives is healthy. And given that these folks will be passing laws and regulations that affect the quality of our lives and our planet, before we vote, we want to know what they will stand for.

We are independent media and our readers appreciate our out of the box, creative, eclectic approach to discovering and celebrating what is really going on. We are not owned by the corporations that control the majority of media's newspapers, radio, magazines and TV.

In order to have healthy people, we need to have a healthy environment, In order to have a healthy, well-managed environment, we need to have thoughtful, dedicated and intelligent governance. This is also part of being 100 percent Canadian and, hopefully, getting the bigger picture.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So from organics to politics and from ecology to spirituality, we will continue to serve you with exciting *Common Ground* editions full of challenging and informative ideas. We are good for another 200 editions so please let us know the issues that are closest to your heart and what you would love to see us cover.

We thank you for supporting this adventure.

Warm regards,
Joseph Roberts,
publisher and senior editor

PS: At right is an example of what you might not see in mammoth, mainstream media. The adventure continues…

Antidepressants no better than sugar pills?

by Alan Cassels

What was probably the biggest drug story in the last five years broke in late February. A study in the Public Library of Science reported that antidepressants – drugs like Prozac, Paxil and Effexor – don't work much better than a placebo. (Search online for Irving Kirsch and PLoS antidepressant study.) This story comes right on the heels of another recent nail in the coffin antidepressant saga, which reported that most of the negative studies related to antidepressants are buried and don't see the light of day.

Basically, on the antidepressant front, our doctors have been prescribing while under the influence and it's not a pretty sight. We should all be pretty outraged at this state of affairs, including the 100,000 people in BC taking ineffective drugs and spending their tax dollars (and ours) to the tune of about $200 million and perhaps eschewing other equally effective but non-drug things that do work.

This story is huge and should shake the medical world to its very foundations, but I predict it won't. Here's what will happen instead.

For starters, stand by for some major ass-covering by the drug makers, who'll blame Kirsch and colleagues for being biased, liberal, anti-innovation rat bags. Then listen as an army of patients sing a common "if I didn't have these drugs, I'd die" tune. That's not to say all those people are lying; the drugs may very well be helping them. They're only lying if they say these drugs work better than a placebo, which this study has shown is crap.

Doctors will snap into action and (appropriately) warn people not to suddenly stop taking their antidepressant. The withdrawal effects of suddenly nuking your antidepressant can make life so miserable for many people that the only rational course of action is to keep taking it. The drug companies will then fan out to physicians' offices, conferences, workshops and hospitals, pigeon-holing the doctors and pharmacists, telling them in caring and sympathetic tones that these drugs "help a lot of people."

So would placebos, at a fraction of the price. And what about seriously funding the alternatives? Don't tell me we can't afford treatments that do work (talk therapy, counseling, etc) when we're throwing away $200 million per year on stuff that doesn't work.

You might be wondering what's next. What big drug class is headed for the toilet like these common antidepressants? Stand by for the cholesterol storm – the subject of my column this month in *Common Ground.*

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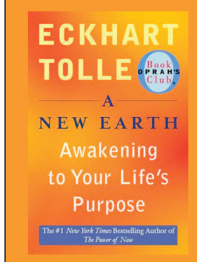
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SPIRITUALITY

Generally speaking, it is easier for a woman to feel and be in her body, so she is naturally closer to Being and potentially closer to enlightenment than a man. This is why many ancient cultures instinctively chose female figures or analogies to represent or describe the formless and transcendental reality. It was often seen as a womb that gives birth to everything in creation and sustains and nourishes it during its life as form.

In the *Tao Te Ching*, one of the most ancient and profound books ever written, the Tao, which could be translated as Being, is described as "infinite, eternally present, the mother of the universe." Naturally, women are closer to it than men since they virtually "embody" the Unmanifested. What is more, all creatures and all things must eventually return to the Source. "All things vanish into the Tao. It alone endures." Since the Source is seen as female, this is represented as the light and dark sides of the archetypal feminine in psychology and mythology. The Goddess or Divine Mother has two aspects: She gives life and she takes life.

When the mind took over and humans lost touch with the reality of their divine essence, they started to think of God as a male figure. Society became male-dominated, and the female was made subordinate to the male. Some people now use the term Goddess instead of God. They are redressing a balance between male and female that was lost a long time ago, and that is good. But it is still a representation and a concept, perhaps temporarily useful, just as a map or a signpost is temporarily useful, but more a hindrance than a help when you are ready to realize the reality beyond all concepts and images.

What does remain true, however, is that the energy frequency of the mind appears to be essentially male. The mind resists, fights for control, uses, manipulates, attacks, tries to grasp and possess, and so on. This is why the traditional God is a patriarchal, controlling, authority figure, an often angry man who you should live in fear of, as the Old Testament suggests. This God is a projection of the human mind.

To go beyond the mind and reconnect with the deeper reality of Being, very different qualities are needed: surrender, nonjudgment, an openness that allows life to be instead of resisting it, the capacity to hold all things in the loving embrace of your knowing. All these qualities are much more closely related to the female principle.

Whereas mind-energy is hard and rigid, Being-energy is soft and yielding and yet infinitely more powerful than mind. The mind runs our civilization, whereas Being is in charge of all life on our planet and beyond. Being is the very Intelligence whose visible manifestation is the physical universe. Although women are potentially closer to it, men can also access it within themselves.

The number of women who are now approaching the fully conscious state already exceeds that of men and will be growing even faster in the years to come.

At this time, the vast majority of men as well as women are still in the grip of the mind: identified with the thinker and the pain-body. This, of course, is what prevents enlightenment and the flowering of love. As a general rule, the major obstacle for men tends to be the thinking mind and the major obstacle for women the pain-body, although in certain individual cases the opposite may be true, and in others the two factors may be equal.

The number of women who are now approaching the fully conscious state already exceeds that of men and will be growing even faster in the years to come. Men may catch up with them in the end, but for some considerable time there will be a gap between the consciousness of men and that of women.

Women are regaining the function that is their birthright: to be a bridge between the manifested world and the Unmanifested, between physicality and spirit. Your main task as a woman now is to transmute the pain-body so that it no longer comes between you and your true self, the essence of who you are.

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Life after life

UNIVERSE WITHIN *Gwen Randall-Young*

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting: The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, hath had elsewhere its setting, and cometh from afar.

– William Wordsworth

What happens when we leave our physical form? This is a question that becomes very real for people when they have lost a loved one. So often they tell me they just want to know that the one who has passed is "okay."

Each spiritual tradition has its own understanding of what happens after death. People who have had near-death experiences have reported various events: seeing the room and themselves from an out-of-body perspective, seeing a bright light and/or a tunnel or even seeing relatives who have already passed on.

we can see utilizing technology – from cells to a tiny fetus – we realize that what we see using our ordinary perception is a small fraction of what is actually there.

The same may be true of our perception of reality. Perhaps one day the technology will exist that allows us to perceive all the other levels. I believe the technology already exists; we just do not know how to use it. That technology is our own consciousness. It is possible to expand our consciousness beyond three-dimensional reality.

I also believe that the souls of the departed are very much with us. They are with us in the same way as when they were alive, but separated from us geographically. The veil is very thin and very close to us. We can access the other side, but only in those moments when we let go of our own hold on the "here and now." We could even go so far as to say there is no separation, no "other side," except that which is created by our own limited consciousness.

If we believe there is more to us than physical form and that there is a part of us that transcends physical reality, it changes everything.

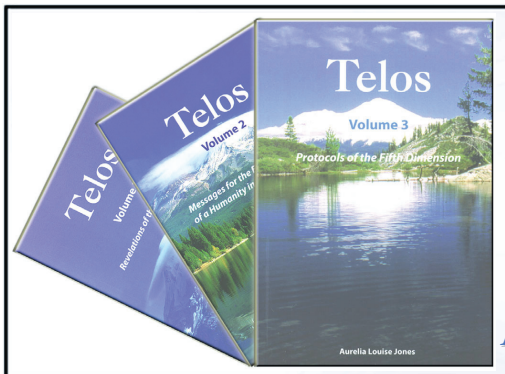
We actually have no empirical evidence of what transpires after we leave our physical form. However, so much of what we know is not based on empirical evidence, but rather on intuition and direct experience.

Many have maintained communication of one sort or another with a person who is no longer here. Some have memories of past lives. These experiences suggest that there is more to life than "life." The whole question certainly relates back to our perception of reality. If we only believe what we see with our eyes and think *that* is objective reality, then it is all over when the body can no longer perceive.

If we believe there is more to us than physical form and that there is a part of us that transcends physical reality, it changes everything. When we die, it is only the physical form that ceases to function, while the transcendent part keeps on going. It is eternal; it was there before we entered physical form and continues on afterward.

Our perception can function a little like a microscope. At one level, we see pretty much the same things that we see with the naked eye. Increase the power and another level is revealed that is just as real as the naked eye reality, but it was outside our perceptual awareness. In fact, when we consider all the things

Gwen Randall-Young is a psychotherapist in private practice and author of Growing Into Soul: The Next Step in Human Evolution. *For articles and information about her books and "Deep Powerful Change" personal growth/hypnosis CDs, visit www.gwen.ca*



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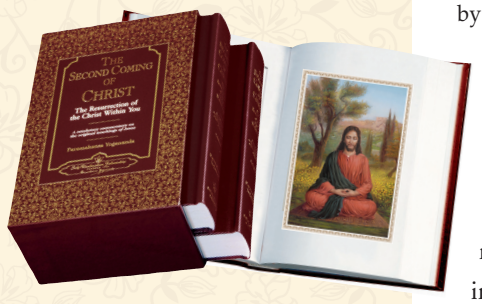

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Yes we can

EARTHFUTURE *Guy Dauncey*

What is the greatest problem we face? No, it is not global warming or that fishing fleets are stealing the last fish from the oceans or that corporate investors are ripping off the Earth's ecosystems and laughing all the way to bank. These are extremely commanding, but they are not the most serious.

Our greatest problem is cynicism, which says, "All these dreams, hopes and ideals – they're not going to happen. You're being naïve. You've not understood how powerful these people are." The cynic says, "I'm not cynical. I'm just experienced." The cynic will defend himself by claiming to know more about the world than you do.

I'm asking you to believe. Not just in my ability to bring about real change in Washington … I'm asking you to believe in yours.

– Barack Obama

This is childish, designed to save face rather than respond in an adult manner. What most cynics are feeling, if they still have hearts, is "I feel so totally defeated. Nothing works out. It's hopeless."

The Cynic's Sanctuary (www.i-cynic.com) notes that a cynic is actually "an idealist whose rose-colored glasses have been removed, snapped in two and stomped into the ground, immediately improving his vision."

Cynicism is understandable because the world is full of disappointment and hurt. The problems we face are so immense, however, and so dauntingly ominous, that we can no longer afford cynicism. It would be more honest to say, "I wish I knew what to do."

When we believe in hope, life takes on a perky attitude. It shines; it laughs and spreads an infectious optimism. In the dark days of 1940, when Hitler's armies had crushed most of Europe under their jackboots, the attitude in Britain was not one of cynicism; it was one of blazing determination, filled with cocky humour, even while people knew they might die in the struggle against the Nazis. When people felt defeated, they kept it to themselves. If they expressed cynicism, they were in danger of being taken for a spy.

So why, when we face problems every bit as grave as they were in 1940, are we beset by sad-faced cynics? The answer may be that people are still awaiting the sign that it is safe to come out of the cave, pick up their belief and experience once more the sun of hope as they join the global effort that is underway.

South of the border, that sign has arrived in the person of Barack Obama, whose determination and hope are arousing millions out of defeat, disappointment and despair. His speeches are electrifying. His *Yes We Can* New Hampshire speech below, turned by a supporter into a YouTube music video, has been viewed by over three million people.

While we breathe, we will hope.

Where we are met with cynicism and doubts and fear, we will respond with that timeless creed, "Yes we can."

It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a nation.

Yes we can.

It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed a trail toward freedom through the darkest of nights.

Yes we can.

It was sung by immigrants as they struck out from distant shores and pioneers who pushed westward against an unforgiving wilderness.

Yes we can.

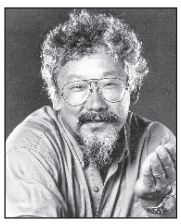
It was the call of workers who organized; women who reached for the ballot; a president who chose the moon as our new frontier; and a king who took us to the mountaintop and pointed the way to the Promised Land.

Yes we can to justice and equality. Yes we can to opportunity and prosperity. Yes we can heal this nation. Yes we can repair this world. Yes we can.

It does not matter that we do not have the equivalent leader here in Canada. It does not matter that the political mood in Ottawa is closer to cold porridge than sun-blessed peaches. All that matters is you.

As Obama says, "I'm asking you to believe. Not just in my ability to bring about real change in Washington … I'm asking you to believe in yours."

Guy Dauncey is the publisher of EcoNews*, and president of the BC Sustainable Energy Association, which welcomes your membership (www.bcsea.org). Visit his personal website at www.earthfuture.com*



Kilroy was here

ENVIRONMENT

SCIENCE MATTERS *David Suzuki with Faisal Moola*

Well, it seems we've finally done it. Humanity has finally made its mark – our own little place in history.

Even if we, as a species, snuff ourselves out now, the next hyper-intelligent creature that emerges from the muck or finds our little planet drifting through space will know that we were here.

Millions of years from now, a scientist with six arms will be sifting through compressed layers of our collective detritus and ponder the most compelling question about our era: Who the heck was Britney Spears?

You see, it seems that we've entered a new epoch: a period of geological time usually reserved for distinguishing between massive periods of change on the planet. In this case, we've moved from the era that geologists call the Holocene, which has been this relatively stable period since the last ice age 10 to 12,000 years ago, to the Anthropocene, a time when human activities have become the dominating force of change on the planet.

Changing epochs is not like changing your socks. In scientific terms, this is a big deal. Epochs tend to be delineated by periods of upheaval. Think ice ages and mass extinctions. When Nobel Prize-winning chemist Dr. Paul Krutzen brought up the idea back in 2000 and again in 2002, it was still considered pretty radical and somewhat impetuous for our little species to have its own epoch.

But a team of scientists writing in a new paper in the journal *GSA Today,* published by the Geological Society of America, now argues that it's becoming increasingly difficult to deny humanity's growing influence on a planetary scale. In their paper, they examine the case for change and conclude that it's time to accept the obvious; we are in the Anthropocene.

According to the researchers, just about every natural process on the planet now bears a human signature. For example, if you look at the soils, humans are now the dominant force behind changes to physical sedimentation. Dramatic increases in erosion from agriculture, road and urban development and dams have pushed people to be the largest producer of sediment by an order of magnitude over nature.

If you look at the air, humans are rapidly changing the composition of the atmosphere by burning vast amounts of oil, coal and gas. As a result, carbon dioxide levels are one-third higher now than they were 200 years ago – higher, in fact, than they have been in the past 900,000 years – and they are expected to double this century.

If you look at life on the planet, human activities are causing the extinction of many species, possibly leading to a "major extinction event" that rivals others, such as the demise of the dinosaurs. Humans are also rapidly replacing vast areas of natural vegetation with agricultural crops. As the researchers point out, "These effects are permanent, as future evolution will take place from surviving (and frequently anthropogenically relocated) stocks."

If you look at the oceans, sea levels have risen slightly due to melting ice and thermal expansion – water expands as it warms – and these levels are expected to continue to rise through the century. Our oceans are also noticeably more acidic now, again due to the human release of so much carbon into the atmosphere, with "potentially severe effects in both benthic (especially coral reef) and planktonic settings," according to the researchers.

So, there you have it – the case for the Anthropocene. We've done it. We've written our name on the wall. We're the king of the hill, lord of the sandbox. We're now the most powerful force of change on the planet, so much so that we actually get our own epoch. A pretty big responsibility for a naked ape that emerged on the plains of Africa only 150,000 years ago.

So what now, little human? What now?

Take David Suzuki's Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

We're now the most powerful force of change on the planet – so much so that we actually get our own epoch. A pretty big responsibility for a naked ape that emerged on the plains of Africa only 150,000 years ago.

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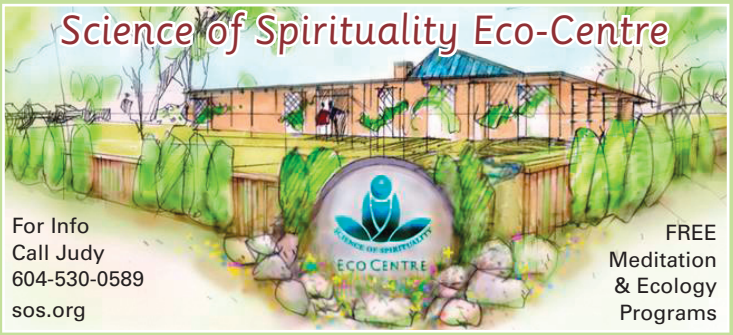

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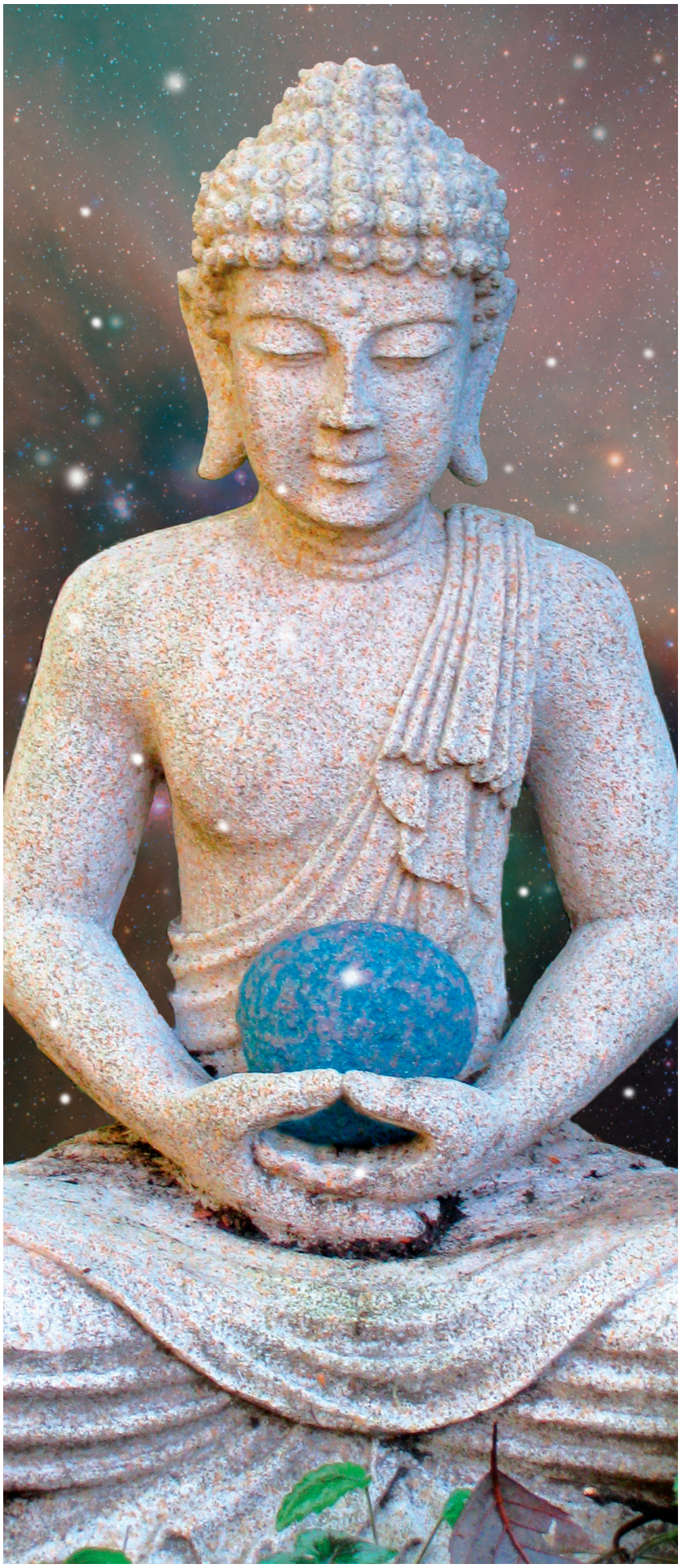
How *Conscious* is the Cosmos?



I was walking along a beach in the Gulf Islands, on a brilliantly sunny afternoon. As I looked out to sea, my thoughts drifted to a news item I'd read earlier in the day. Out in the Pacific, between Hawaii and Japan, there are two vast islands of plastic garbage, held in place by swirling underwater currents. According to the *Telegraph*, the "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" or "trash vortex," is believed to contain about 100 million tons of flotsam. It's a plastic soup running to the depth of 10 metres, and twice the size of the continental United States. That's right, two agglomerations of floating junk, totalling twice the size of the US.

While some of this crap comes from storm-tossed container ships, most of it has been dumped off passenger ships and other vessels. But I'm not concerned here with the particulars of eco-catastrophe. With time running out, we desperately need new ways of thinking and feeling. The old ways are obviously broken beyond repair.

I reached down to pick up a rock from the beach and cradled it in my hand. I appreciated its symmetry and smoothness, but there was nothing really remarkable about it. Like every other inanimate object, it's essentially an inert thing. It's as dumb as… well, a rock, I guess.

Yet, according to the emerging science of "digital physics," the rock's true nature is pure information. This is true for everything on the beach and beyond. All matter and energy, and all of its evolving forms, are expressions of a massive parallel processing program – an inconceivably long and large cosmic computation.

The universe is binary in nature, according to digital physics. Everything from crayfish to cathedrals to Cate Blanchette is the "output" of universal computation. All biological and cultural evolution, all our hopes and dreams, our aches and pains and flights of joy, ultimately derive from binary operations.

It all seems a bit counterintuitive. If I were to accidentally drop the rock on my foot, I wouldn't normally say I had an interaction with information. But science has a way of surprising us.

In the 1970s, computer scientist John Conway came up with The Game of Life, a computer game in which organic-looking patterns and self-replicating "entities" emerged on a computer screen from a few simple, repeating rules. In the 1980s, the eminent theoretical physicist John Archibald Wheeler, a collaborator with Einstein, claimed that atoms are made up of bits of information. "Every 'it' – every particle, every field of force, even the space-time continuum itself – derives its function, its meaning, its very existence entirely from binary choices, bits. What we call reality arises in the last analysis from the posing of yes/no questions."

Zen philosopher Alan Watts said virtually the same thing back in the sixties, albeit in a more poetic way. He called it the cosmic game of Yes and No. The vibratory buzz of existence derives from microscopic transitions between on and off states, he claimed, drawing on the ideas of Taoism.

By the eighties, the idea of cosmic computation was enough of a sci-fi staple that author Douglas Adams could lampoon it in *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*. (The ultimate answer to the riddle of existence, "42," was a source of great confusion to the book's characters.)

The magnum opus of digital physics arrived in 2002, with *A New Kind of Science*, a huge tome by mathematician Stephen Wolfram. At the age of 13, Wolfram won a MacArthur "genius grant" and went on to make a fortune from his academic software program Mathematica. He used the proceeds to finance the publication of his 1,200-page brainbuster. For some reviewers the book was the ultimate in vanity publishing. Here was a guy who had the temerity to say he'd discovered a whole "new science"! A flurry of scientific interest followed, but the book's daunting size put off many reviewers.

Back in the 1980s, Wolfram began to investigate "cellular automata." These are simple logical procedures in which the output of each operation is fed back as input, much like Conway's Life computer game. Wolfram noticed that printed outputs of his cellular automata sometimes created complex patterns, resembling those seen in seashells, leaves and sea creatures. By tweaking the input, Wolfram found he could generate a surprising amount of beauty and complexity. Wolfram believed he had hit on the Rosetta Stone for the cosmic code; a trippy theory that could subsume every conceivable entity and force in the universe.

Wolfram didn't just riff off the ideas of his predecessors. He gave formal rigour to what had previously been vague scientific speculations. One of his more intriguing findings is the "Principle of Computational Equivalence." One computer is capable of emulating another computer, regardless of its speed or capacity. This is why a Mac can run as a PC or function as a slow supercomputer. All complex systems can model each other, Wolfram claims. A stream of water, a windstorm, a caterpillar in a pupa, the human brain, are equivalent in their computational complexity.

In a 2002 essay published in *Wired*, former editor of the magazine, Kevin Kelly, wrote enthusiastically describing Wolfram's ideas: "Your brain and the physics of a cup being filled with water are equivalent… for your mind to compute a thought and the universe to compute water particles falling, both require the same universal process." The extraordinary consequences of Wolfram's ideas only become clear toward the end of his massive book, a place most deadline-driven book reviewers avoided. From the standpoint of digital physics, a stream flowing past a rock is no less complex than a human brain, says Wolfram. The stream can be said to be "solving problems," just as the brain does, although in this case the problems involve fluid dynamics, flowing around rocks and other obstructions.

Wolfram continues, "And while from the point of view of our intellectual modern thinking this may come as quite a shock it is perhaps not so surprising at the level of everyday experience. For there are certainly many systems in nature whose behaviour is complex enough that we often describe in human terms. And indeed in early human thinking it is very common to encounter the idea of animism: that systems with complex behaviour in nature must be driven by the same kind of essential spirit as humans."

Although he isn't explicitly endorsing animism or spirits, Wolfram was close to venturing into the boggy territory of "pansychism." This is the notion that mind imbues all things, living and nonliving.

Panpsychism was in its heyday back in the 19th century, but it's recently made a comeback. In 2006, British philosopher Galen Strawson argued in his book, *Consciousness and Its Place in Nature*, that if we are nothing more than an arrangement of stuff, then this arrangement of physical stuff has "interiority," or a capacity for experience.

The vast majority of us believe that experience requires, at minimum, a brain. Not so, insist the panpyschists, who believe that mind can run on a wide range of platforms and that it's the processing that's important. Anything that is an information processor – virtually every object in the universe, in other words – partakes in the cosmic computation. It therefore has some semblance of mind.

From the standpoint of digital physics, a rock is hardly an inert object. It "senses" the world around it. Its atoms jiggle in response to the air temperature; the electron shells respond to pressure from the atoms in my hand. The rock is a buzz of activity, in constant communication with the world outside, though there's no intelligible output. We can be fairly certain it doesn't fear a blow from a hammer, or dream of being a boulder. Yet there's a lot going on inside, a world's worth of subatomic information processing. You might even say it has a memory of sorts, inscribed into its fracture lines and pitted surface. (Rocks and stones have always been the explanatory favourites for panpsychists – see sidebar.) Panpsychists take this digital take on things and run with it.

Okay, fine. Some of us might accept there is some subjective experience attached to being a mayfly. But a lump of granite? That interpretation is lunacy, it seems.

Yet scientists still barely understand how human subjective experiences emerge from the activity of neurons. We don't regard ourselves as Darwinian robots, reflexively responding to our surroundings, without feelings. So how can we know with any assurance that other complex systems, both organic and inorganic, are different? As Australian philosopher David Chalmers says, "Experience is information from the inside; physics is information from the outside."

Brave New World author Aldous Huxley insisted that human consciousness is a very specialized form of thought, engineered for survival as a savannah-hunting primate. Huxley called the human mind a "reducing valve" for consciousness, allowing in a controlled trickle of what he referred to as "Mind at Large." To the late British physicist Sir Arthur Eddington, "The stuff of the world is mind-stuff." Freeman Dyson, who followed Einstein at Princeton University's Institute for Advanced Study, was more explicit. "The laws [of physics] leave a place for mind in the description of every molecule… In other words, mind is already inherent in every electron, and the processes of human consciousness differ only in degree and not in kind…"

Aren't there far worse ways to look at the world, what with the icecaps melting and honeybees disappearing? It's never too late to start thinking of the world as a "thou," rather than an "it."

At the other end of the cosmic scale, British biologist Rupert Sheldrake, inventor of the concept of morphic resonance, has speculated that the sun might have some form of consciousness. He's even asked other scientists to explain to him why it can't. So far, no one has offered a satisfactory refutation, he says.

Sheldrake's notion of solar awareness came to him after reading *The Black Cloud*, a sci-fi novel by the late astronomer Fred Hoyle. In the novel, scientists discover signals from an extraterrestrial intelligence in space. It turns out to be a cloud of interstellar gas, which "thinks" through the transmission of electric charges among its free-floating atoms.

There isn't the space here to explore all the shades of panpsychism, or the debate surrounding the theory. And in spite of the scientific silverbacks who've given it a nod, it remains on the fringes of academic respectability, with the vast majority of thinkers giving it no more thought than a rock would.

But one thing is undeniable: pansychism introduces the possibility that our world is far more vibrant and alive than previously thought. We become open to the possibility that everything around us is "ensouled." And aren't there far worse ways to look at the world, what with the icecaps melting and honeybees disappearing? It's never too late to start thinking of the world as a "thou," rather than an "it." Many so-called primitive people have done so for millennia; in fact, only in the past 500 years have some civilized people thought otherwise.

It's arguable that we're in such trouble largely because of our beliefs of who and what we are. In one view, humans are mere accidents of evolution, huddling on a small planet in orbit around an average star, on the suburbs of one galaxy among billions, in a cold, meaningless universe. In another view, God whipped everything into existence in less than a week, and it shows: the planet we've inherited from Adam and Eve is said to be corrupt and fallen.

On the one side, the religious tribalism of monotheists. On the other, the Earth-eating ethos of materialists. These are the dominant camps of belief on the planet and both are clearly unsustainable.

If modern science has one central message for us, it's interconnectedness. Both ecology and quantum theory attest that all things are mutually involved with one another. No sparrow can fall from a tree without sending out ripples of causation into the biosphere and beyond. Digital physics takes this idea to the furthest point; our deepest identity isn't the socially constructed self, but the whole shebang it's embedded in.

Until we have a better operational definition of "mind," I'm not totally sold on panpsychism. And if the idea does make headway in popular culture, I could easily imagine it being dumbed-down to a spiritual Ponzi scheme like *The Secret*. But one thing seems likely: If most planetary citizens thought of the physical world, and its constituents, as being ensouled, we probably wouldn't treat it with such contempt. We wouldn't allow polar bears, songbirds or Bengal tigers to disappear into the history books. We wouldn't be reading insane news about continent-sized whirlpools of garbage in the Pacific.

Panspsychism may or may not remain the orphan child of Western philosophy. Digital physics, on the other hand, appears to be gaining ground among researchers and thinkers.

Copernicus exiled Earth from the centre of the universe, and Darwin demonstrated human beings are animals. For the past few centuries, it's been one blow after another to human pride. And now Wolfram and his colleagues say we are nothing more than a bunch of bits. Yet the theory of digital physics may take us all the way around the other side, to our pre-Copernican starting point.

Stephen Wolfram insists we're deeply connected to a binary ground of being: "So while science has often made it seem that we as humans are somehow insignificant compared to the universe, the Principle of Computational Equivalence now shows that in a certain sense we are at the same level as it is. For the principle implies that what goes on inside us can ultimately achieve just the same level of computational sophistication as our whole universe."

In *Auguries of Innocence*, Victorian era poet William Blake put it another way:

To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.

mwiseguise@yahoo.com

ON THE GARDEN PATH *Carolyn Herriot*

Contributing to our local food supply

How secure do you feel about the global food supply right now? The price of food is going up and there are unprecedented food surplus shortages due to impacts of climate change, peak oil, soil degradation, bee colony collapse, population explosion and fresh water shortages on global agriculture. How does the fact that, overall, BC imports 50 percent of the food it consumes strike you? (Vancouver Island imports 95 percent.)

How do you feel about the fact that one sixth of the Agricultural Land Reserve has been removed from production since 1974? Does any of this make sense given that we have increasing urban populations to feed? Who is setting the policies that allow such an unsustainable situation to occur? Am I right to feel nervous about the future while supermarket shelves are bulging with choices?

We can no longer depend on a centralized global food production system that depends heavily on fossil fuels for chemical inputs, packaging, processing and transportation. We have woken up to the fact that when we stopped feeding ourselves, the corporations moved in, and now we are all paying the price for the luxury of eating cheap, mass-produced food shipped from all over the world. The link is being made between healthy individuals and communities and eating REAL food. (Regional, environmentally-responsible, agricultural, land use.)

Our parents and grandparents "Dug for Victory" during times of food scarcity in World War II and we can do it again. Rooftops, back lanes, schoolyards, city allotments, green spaces, traffic islands, public gardens and land zoned for agricultural use can all be planted with edible plants. How did we allow growing food to become such a disreputable pastime? What good is all the money in the bank when we forget how to feed ourselves? Increasing incentives for young farmers to get back on the land and save seeds makes a lot of sense right now. Ninety-eight percent of the world's food seed sales are now in the hands of six corporations; I believe that centralized control is a dangerous and vulnerable situation to be in during the best of times, never mind during uncertain times.

Gardeners can contribute to increasing local food security by joining the Grow-Your-Own-Food movement. The West Coast of Canada is one of the best places to grow food year-round so we have no excuse not to do so. Instead of growing pansies and petunias this year, we can grow potatoes because you can't depend on flowers in a crisis. Gardeners can make edible landscaping *de rigueur* in 2008, but they will have to go to their local garden centers and demand a variety of fruits, food starts and seeds for this purpose. (Preferably organically-grown!) Ask your garden centre to provide winter vegetables in summer so you can harvest food from your backyard all winter.

Ask why your local public garden does not grow food. When we don't see food plants growing around us, we forget where food comes from. When you see fruit rotting on the ground in fall, collect it and learn how to put it by for the winter. You may just be very glad you did. We need to reconnect children to their food source and health and we need to get the next generation of food growers on board. We need to establish a new respect for nature by realizing that we do not have all the answers. By working in co-creation with Mother Nature, we will discover that she takes care of us as we take care of her.

Now's the time to prepare the earth, order the seeds and shop for fruit and berry plants. I will talk you through growing your "New Victory Garden" in the months to come. Feed the soil right now, so it can feed the plants you plan to grow. The more fertile the soil, the more intensively you can plant for higher yields. Natural organic soil amendments such as compost, manures, leaf mulch and seaweed are bountiful and free, and exercise and fresh air will do you good. Happy digging for victory!

Carolyn Herriot is author of A Year on the Garden Path*, which talks you through growing food year-round and seed saving. http://www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath/ Check out the weekly progress of The New Victory Garden in Victoria by following Carolyn's blog on www.gardenwise.ca*

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– Author unknown

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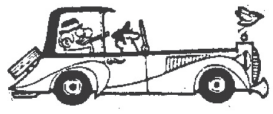

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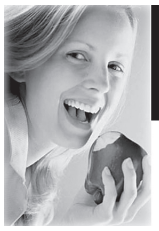

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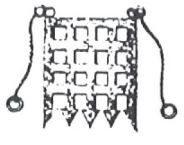

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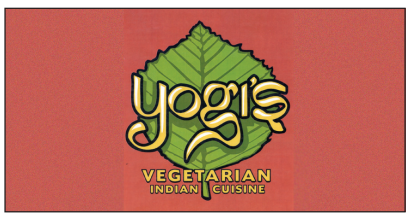

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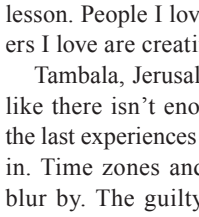
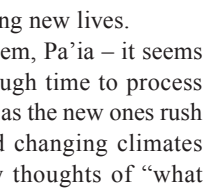

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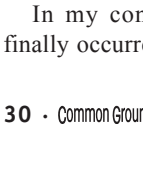
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– Don Galer

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CULTURE

TWENTY SOMETHING *Ishi Dinim*

My life has entirely changed since the last time I wrote this column; in some ways I feel like a new person. Mortality puts things in perspective unlike any other lesson. People I love have died and others I love are creating new lives.

Tambala, Jerusalem, Pa'ia – it seems like there isn't enough time to process the last experiences as the new ones rush in. Time zones and changing climates blur by. The guilty thoughts of "what I should've done" ache in my head; I haven't cried enough yet. I feel like a part of the world again.

You can only run from pain for so long. It is everywhere. The rawness of life in Malawi was just over there in my mind. Now I realize that I take it with me everywhere, and there is beauty and suffering the world over. Our grief is valid; regardless of class or race or gender or whatever, we are all connected by it.

In my continuing self-critique, it finally occurred to me that I can't save the world, but I also gleaned that it is most likely impossible for any one person to save it either. I'm finally starting to accept that what I'm *doing* is good enough. My art and pictures can save lives, starting with my own. I can't always communicate an idea or feeling verbally, but the pictures do it. They can translate themselves into social change or directly into resources.

For too long now, I've been living in my little stories. Digging holes that I *couldn't* get out of, thinking that I'm way more fucked up than I actually am and doubting the importance of what I have to offer. Each of us can only do what we can. We can be more than the story of who we think we are. Making mistakes is allowed. They are one of the only ways we learn and forgiveness wouldn't exist without them.

I'm over wanting to be perfect. Bring on the growing pains, the fumbles and errors. I'm going for it, baby.

I never thought that I might be a person with regrets, however, when I look in the mirror, that person is starting to look trapped by them.

For years, I've been letting my fears of screwing up or not being successful stop me from even getting started on accomplishing certain dreams. Without even making an attempt, it is impossible to succeed.

Anyhow, I'm over wanting to be perfect. Bring on the growing pains, the fumbles and errors. I'm going for it, baby.

Quotes

Why is it that people who cannot show feeling presume that that is strength and not a weakness? – May Sarton

If you're really listening, if you're awake to the poignant beauty of the world, your heart breaks regularly.
–Andrew Harvey

When you are sorrowful, look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight. – Khalil Gibran

Films

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly
No Country for Old Men

Ishi graduated from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2001, with a BFA major in photography. He makes films, collects cacti and ponders many things. Currently he is doing what he can for himself and the planet. contactishi@yahoo.ca Waiting to hear echoes back…

Freedom or Stop-Loss

FILMS WORTH WATCHING *Robert Alstead*

Photo: François Duhamel

L to R: Ida (Linda Emond), Brandon (Ryan Phillippe) and Roy King (Ciarán Hinds) celebrate upon the young man's return home from his tour of duty in *Stop-Loss*.

One of the most popular films at the Vancouver International Film Festival last year, winning the audience award for best non-fiction film, was the *Common Ground*-sponsored *Garbage Warrior*. Director Oliver Hodge shot the film over three years, largely in the desert of New Mexico where maverick architect Mike Reynolds builds his "earth ships," as well as in the Tsunami-struck Andaman Islands and Mexico. The documentary, released on February 22, was reviewed in detail in this column last September, so suffice it to say that it's a fresh and stimulating take on the difficulties of green home building, in terms of both politics and design.

Another VIFF favourite, and Austria's submission to this year's Oscars in the foreign film category, is World War Two-set *The Counterfeiters (Die Fälscher),* another film I reviewed at some length last September. The film is based on a true story of how, during the latter part of the war, the Nazis tried to swamp Britain and the US with counterfeit money produced by concentration camp victims. It should be out by the time you read this.

Following the critically well-received dramas *In the Valley of Elah* and *Rendition* (they didn't fare so well at the box office, however), comes another fictional story about the US occupation of Iraq. *Stop-Loss* (out on the 28th), the latest from *Boys Don't Cry* director Kimberly Peirce, takes as its starting point what has been dubbed the "backdoor draft." Stop-loss is the practice of extending the contract of a soldier's term of military service against his or her wishes. In this case, after a celebrated tour of duty in Iraq, Sgt. Brandon King (Ryan Phillippe) is trying to re-adjust to civilian life in a small Texan town, when he is stop-lossed back to Iraq.

While the story is fictional, it echoes recent incidents of conscientious objectors who decided that the more they learned about the situation in Iraq, the more they felt they could not continue to serve there. The trailer for *Stop-Loss* shows Ryan Phillippe's character struggling to reconcile his conflicting emotions about patriotic duty, love, friendships and honour. When he goes on the run, he is handed a Canadian passport and told, "Here's your new ID. You go... you're going for good."

At the time of writing, the MTV-made film had had little exposure to the media so it's difficult to know whether the film is any good. But Peirce has commandeered both an appealing cast and an experienced crew so there's plenty of promise. The film features rising stars Abbie Cornish (she plays the romantic interest) and Channing Tatum who plays a fellow Iraq veteran and best friend to Phillippe's character.

Behind the lens is cinematographer Chris Menges, who won Oscars for *The Mission* and *The Killing Fields*, and the film's editor Claire Simpson won an Oscar for *Platoon*. This being an MTV film, the soundtrack and treatment are likely to have a youthfulness and energy that should appeal to the very generation being called upon to support US government policy in Iraq.

If you're looking for something a little more light-hearted, Brit actor Simon Pegg (the skinny one from *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz*) returns as an overweight under-achiever trying to win back his ex-fiancée, who he jilted at the altar five years earlier, by running the London marathon. Problem is he is overweight and she now has a wealthy, good-looking fiancé. The film has been unanimously described as (sorry) run-of-the-mill, but funny in parts.

Robert Alstead made the Vancouver-set documentary You Never Bike Alone, available on DVD at www.youneverbikealone.com

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Datebook

World Against War Global Day of Action March 15
Saturday, noon, Vancouver Art Gallery.
Protest five years of war on Iraq, demand troops out of Afghanistan, and no attack on Iran.
Speakers, comedy and music; sponsored by StopWar.ca and Canadians Against War.

MAR 8
Shamanic Drumming & Dreaming Circle: Saturday, 7-10PM. Learn to experience insight/healing from your Nature Spirit Totem guardians. At Vancouver Multi-Cultural Society, 1254 W. 7th. By donation. Earthsong Healing Circles. 604.418.9636, www.shamanichealing.info

MAR 8
Free Spring Living Fair: Support local businesses focusing on organic and eco-friendly products/services for the spring season. Live music. 10AM-4PM, Heritage Hall (3102 Main St.). www.springlivingfair.blogspot.com

MAR 8 or APR 12
Core Belief Engineering Doorway to Success: Great Value! Learn and experience CBE. One day of theory and exercises; one day of private personal transformation. 604-536-7402.

MAR 9
Transformation of Man series: Tape 3 of 7 with Krishnamurti-philosopher, Bohm-physicist, Shainberg-psychiatrist. Sunday, 4PM, open dialogue 5:30-7:15PM, MacMillan Planetarium. Donation. (Tape 4/7 April 13). Information: 604-734-7774.

MAR 12
Gabor Maté discusses his most recent book, In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters With Addiction. Host: Dr. Bruce Alexander, Professor, SFU, 7:30PM, Saint Andrew's-Wesley, 1022 Nelson @ Burrard. Min. Donation: $5.

MAR 12-MAY 28
Dru Yoga Classes: 7-9PM, The Peace Centre, 16th @ Burrard – Mar. 12, 19, 26; Apr. 2, 9; May 7, 14, 21, 28.

MAR 13
Kabbalah – Down to Earth Spirituality 6-week Beginner Course, with Kabbalistic scholar, Rabbi Saltoun in Vancouver, Thursdays starting March 13, 8-9:30PM, $180. Contact Gail 604-298-9029 or KabbalahAdmin@telus.net (classes ongoing).

MAR 18-20
Exploring Nature – A Family Retreat On Mayne Island: Inclusive prices. Check: www.royalroads.ca/continuingstudies Deadline March 7, 2008. Info: (250) 391-2600 ext. 4801.

MAR 20
Freedom and Liberation Documentary film premiere in celebration of Shri Mataji's 85th birthday. UBC Robson Square Theatre. 6:30 pm. Free. www.freemediation.ca, 604-597-8440

MAR 21
Planetary Peace Meditation: Join us for this powerful meditation held on the full moon, Mar 21 at 7:30PM. 2950 Laurel St, Vancouver. www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver.htm

MAR 21
Full Moon Festivals of Spring: Join us for Transmission Meditation & experience the potent Aquarian energies of Synthesis and Brotherhood, 7:30pm. SPEC, 2150 Maple St., 778-866-9568.

MAR 21-24
Easter Celebration Retreat: Celebrate Easter with Special Meditations, singing, sharing. Walks to beaches, lake, forest. Self Realization Meditation Healing Centre, Sunshine Coast 1-604-740-0898.

MAR 22
Wolfsong Chanting Circle – Spring Equinox Celebration: Saturday, 7-10pm. Participate in drumming and singing shared sacred healing chants from the Spirit of the Land. At Vancouver Multi-Cultural Society, 1254 W. 7th. By donation. Earthsong Healing Circles. 604.418.9636, www.shamanichealing.info

MAR 24
Past Life Regression: Experience a fascinating journey into your PAST for more understanding of your PRESENT. 535 West 10th Ave, 7PM, $75. Pre-registration www.lifebetweenlives.ca, 604-741-7944.

MAR 28-30
Basic Holistic Hand Reflexology Introduction commences certificate weekend course. Intro: $10, Course $325. Pacific Institute of Reflexology, (604) 875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com

MAR 29, APR 12, MAY 10
Dru Yoga Workshops: St Marks Church, Larch Street at 2nd Ave. Register: 604-263-4432 or 604-936-3255 or canada@druworldwide.com
Details www.druworldwide.com/canada

MAR 29-30, APR 4-6 or APR 2-6
Core Belief Engineering Basic Course: Learn how to transform limiting core beliefs in this mind-expanding five-day course. Personal transformation; Practitioner Certification. 604-536-7402. www.corebelief.ca / info@corebelief.ca

APR 11, 12
Environmentalists! Hear Toni Pieroni, RCC, Fri., April 11, 7PM, Unitarian Sanctuary, 49th/Oak, "5 Spiritual Practices": Gratitude, Facing Fears, Vision, Inter-Being, Action. April 12, Toni leads a workshop based on Joanna Macy's "The Work That Reconnects," $50 incl. lunch. Contact perrink@shaw.ca

APR 11-13
Basic Holistic Foot Reflexology Introduction commences certificate weekend course. Intro: $10, Course $325. Pacific Institute of Reflexology, (604) 875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com

APR 19
Live Smart Diabetes Expo: 8:30AM-3PM, Broadway Church, 2700 E Broadway, Vancouver
Register at www.diabetes.ca or call 1-800-BANTING.

APR 19
Slow Food Vancouver & Cherry Blossom Festival's Bike the Blossoms: 9AM-4PM. Meet with your bike at VanDusen Botanical Garden, 5251 Oak St., West Parking Lot. Free.
Info/registration: www.slowfoodvancouver.com

APR 25-27
Electromagnetic Fields workshop – Identify and solve electromagnetic field problems; bioeffects, symptoms. Certificate. For professionals and laypersons. Outline: www.essentia.ca / (888) 639-7730. Attractive early registration discounts.

APR 25-27
Authentic Hawaiian Lomilomi Massage communicates deep within the core of self. Module I: Apr. 25, evening & Sat/San 10AM-5PM. $395. Intro: March 26, $10, www.lomi4life.com, 604-431-7474.

MAY 1-4
Vancouver Marathon & Urban Lifestyle Expo: To volunteer, call 604-872-2928 or register at www.bmovanmarathon.ca Expo: May 1-3, Westin Bayshore, Vancouver. Marathon: May 4.

MAY 2
Dr. George Carlo, PhD presents a talk on health hazards of cell phones, cell towers & EMFs & signs of electro-sensitivity and how to deal with it. 7-9PM, Saint Andrew's-Wesley, 1022 Nelson @ Burrard.

JUN 19, & 20-22
Basic DNA Theta Healing with Loretta Mohl: Jun 19 free lecture, sponsored by the Canadian College of Healing Arts. Register at 780-910-5052 or email Loretta@CanadianCollegeofHealingArts.com, www.CanadianCollegeofHealingArts.com

JUL 13-19
Pure Meditation: Deepen your connection with the Divine. Answer all spiritual and mortal concerns. Taught by direct disciple of Mata Yogananda. SRMH Centre, Sunshine Coast, 1-604-740-0898.

SATURDAYS

Holistic Healing Fair: Third Saturday of every month. Awakening Heart, 15177 Russell Ave., White Rock. 10-4PM, Free. 604-535-6603, www.emergingpathway.ca

SUNDAYS

The Centre for Spiritual Living uniting the world in love. Inspired by the teachings of Deepak Chopra and Louise Hay. You'll love our Sunday services, 11AM. Children welcome. 1495 W. 8th Ave.,Vancouver, 604-321-1225, www.cslvancouver.com

International Spiritualist Alliance: #201-317 Columbia Street, New West, 604-521-6336. Sunday services, 11AM. Rev. Joyce Tarvin, 604-433-6663, www.isacanada.ca. See Resource Directory ad.

SOS (Science of Spirituality): See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria. 604-277-1247. All Welcome. www.sos.org

Unity of Vancouver: Empowering people to create prosperity, health and loving relationships through the practical application of spiritual principles. Sunday Services 11AM, 5840 Oak St., Vancouver (604) 266-6281.

MONDAYS

Free, anonymous, telephone support line: Guided meditations for people suffering from chronic pain. Non-religious. Counselors have community crisis line training. 7-11PM, 604-936-5683.

TUESDAYS

Children of War fundraiser at Chai Gallery at East is East, 4413 Main St. @ 28, 7:30PM-1:30AM, 604-879-2020. See Wed. listing for more info. www.thechildrenofwar.org.

Reflexology Student Clinic sessions, only $18. Evenings only. By appointment. Pacific Institute of Reflexology. 604-875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com.

Prize-winning Scottish choir seeks new members: Non-Gaelic speakers welcome. No audition required. Scottish/Gaelic traditional songs. Practice: 7:45PM, Scottish Cultural Centre, 70th/Hudson, Sandra 604-724-6911.

Free Talks: What Homeopathy Can Do For You – 7-8PM, Mar. 11, 18 & 25, Access Natural Healing, 101-1416 Commercial Drive. 10 people per session. 604-568-4663, el@accessnaturalhealing.com

DRU Yoga on Broadway: Creating Balance, Strength, Energy, Grace, 7-8:30PM, the HUB, 3355 W. Broadway, between Blenheim & Waterloo. Experience the difference DRU makes. 604-876-5153 soulforce@telus.net

WEDNESDAYS

Voice Dialogue: (6-8pm) Cultivating awareness of the intelligence within; explore how to enhance relationship intimacy and grow more fully into who you are meant to be. Call Dave @ 604-985-5771 or 604-488-9203 www.davewaugh.net

Hawaiian Medicine Circle: 7PM. Hawaiian guided meditation, Sharing the Aloha, tea and snacks. $10 donation. At Hale Ola, 1215 Madison Ave., Burnaby. 604-431-7474. Call Kumu Kaimana.

Children of War fundraiser: At Chai Gallery, upstairs at East is East. Local musicians & traditional dancers, 7:30PM-1:30AM, 3243 W. Broadway. $25/door, 778-837-1862, www.thechildrenofwar.org.

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International Women's Day March 8

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Classifieds

FRIDAYS

"Destiny Dialogues" Free Talks (7-9PM). First Friday of each month, experiential evening that explores the inter-connections between destiny and: suffering, relationships, vocations, joy, teachers, character, nature, family, dreams. Call Michael 604-317-1613 to RSVP.

Give Peace a Chant! Kirtan - Yoga of Sound: Call and response style chanting in a friendly community setting. No experience necessary. 7:30PM, 2111 W.16th Ave. @ Arbutus www.givepeaceachant.org

Just Dance Party Event: Three Fridays a month. Alcohol & smoke-free. 9PM, 2114 W. 4th Ave. @ Arbutus. $10/door. Mar. 7 Journeys – Mar 14 Ethnicity – Mar. 28 Fusion.

ONGOING

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Unitarian kids believe in their ability and responsibility to make a difference in the world. Programs for kids 3 years and up, 370 Mathers St., West Vancouver, 604-926-1621, www.nsuc.ca

Free Mental Wellness Self-Help Support Group: Kitsilano area. Saturdays, bi-weekly, 10:30AM-12:30PM, 604-630-6865.

Holistic Medicine in Africa: Organized Medicine Foundation (OMF) needs volunteers. We offer holistic medicine to people in rural Africa. www.organizedmedicine.org or ameet@organizedmedicine.org

Langley eating disorder support group run by eating disorder survivor and nurse. Email edgroup_char@hotmail.com for info.

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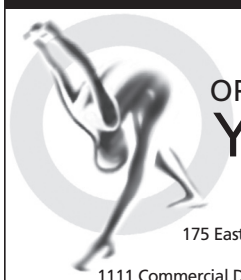

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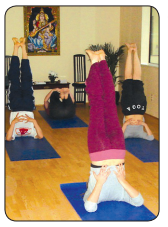

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Unitarian congregations of BC

The Unitarian Fellowship of Kelowna Warms Up a Cold Winter

It began with a moving story about homelessness during a worship service. The children met and talked and a decision was made to do something. Thus began the planning stage for helping Inn From the Cold, a program which provides shelter for people who are homeless during the cold winter.

TWO SUNDAYS LATER: Will you look at the good things we collected together!! First aid items, tooth brushes, soap, blankets - all kinds of foods and other good stuff. And so we teach our children to "affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person".

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Come as you are!

Beacon Unitarian Church www.beaconunitarian.org
North Shore Unitarian www.nsuc.ca
South Fraser Unitarian Congregation www.sfuc.bc.ca
Unitarian Church of Vancouver www.vancouver.unitarians.ca
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Kamloops www.uukam.bc.ca
Unitarian Fellowship of Kelowna www.unitariancongregation.org/kelowna/
The Unitarian Fellowship of Salt Spring Island unitariancongregation.org/saltspring/
First Unitarian Church of Victoria www.victoriaunitarian.ca
Capital Unitarian Universalist Congregation www.unitariancongregation.org/victoria/
First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo www.ufon.ca
Comox Valley Unitarian Society www.unitariancongregation.org/comox/

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Common Ground

On Track Zodiac

MARCH 2008 Adrien Dilon

ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 19)
How are your resolutions or agreements holding up? Take small steps to keep the promises you made to yourself. Daily rituals will help give you order and a sense of completion as you finish things you started. Any endeavours will be graced by vitality and achievement.

TAURUS (Apr 20 – May 21)
The men in your life could be the harbinger of opportunity at this time. They hold some significance and may open doors to new experiences. Encouragement and direction will be provided by a paternal/guardian figure.

GEMINI (May 22 – Jun 20)
You might feel as light as a feather, like a mercurial substance gliding through the air. Although this might be your usual personality, take advantage of the intense energy that is now available to communicate your "clear as crystal" message.

CANCER (Jun 21 – Jul 22)
You may desire to conceal yourself to protect your sensitive nature. If you are able to work alone now, it would be optimum for your creativity. You may want to stay in your comfort zone to feel your passive energy flow on your own terms.

LEO (Jul 23 – Aug 22)
You may find you are somewhat disenchanted with present circumstances; any sour grapes coming your way might simply need your special mix of sweetness added to the mix. Recognizing what you need for your life to stay on track has self empowerment written all over it.

VIRGO (Aug 23 – Sep 22)
If you need to finish or dismiss projects that don't live up to your standards, learning to say no is the way to go. Try not to take on anything new in the coming months. You will feel a whole lot different about things after closer examination. Work on present tasks before heading into new terrain.

LIBRA (Sep 23 – Oct 22)
Don't allow compromise to stand in the way of making your point. If you feel someone is taking advantage of your good nature, you may need to take aim and get to the point. Brief, blunt and truthful may be a better way for you to deliver your message.

SCORPIO (Oct 23 – Nov 21)
Your drive and ambition could be fuelled now by new interests, even as you keep your primary dream of success ignited. Necessity is the mother of invention and you know only too well how magic has a hand in how you make your mark in the universe.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
Taking on too many responsibilities should be avoided. If complying with demands has you overly challenged, watch it abate without taking on the frayed nerves of those around you. Tranquility must be summoned daily.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
You will have a chance to Know what you want; see it and go after it. The truth is everything aligns for you to carry out your hopes and wishes. There's no stopping you on your way up a precipitous hill with your clearly marked plan.

AQUARIUS (Jan 20 – Feb 19)
You are sure to meet new and captivating people as you step out into special events and engagements. Spending on new luxuries could be very tempting. When taking in new delights for body and spirit, keep in mind the standard food groups that comprise healthy eating.

PISCES (Feb 20 – Mar 20)
There is now an inclination to travel or to lavish your home and make it feel altogether different. You may be of two minds now as you crave soul fulfillment while at the same time structuring your day-to-day life. Perhaps deep inner landscapes can be visualized and brought into concrete reality.

Adrien Dilon is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 33 years of experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing, adrien.dilon@gmail.com, members.shaw.ca/adrien.dilon

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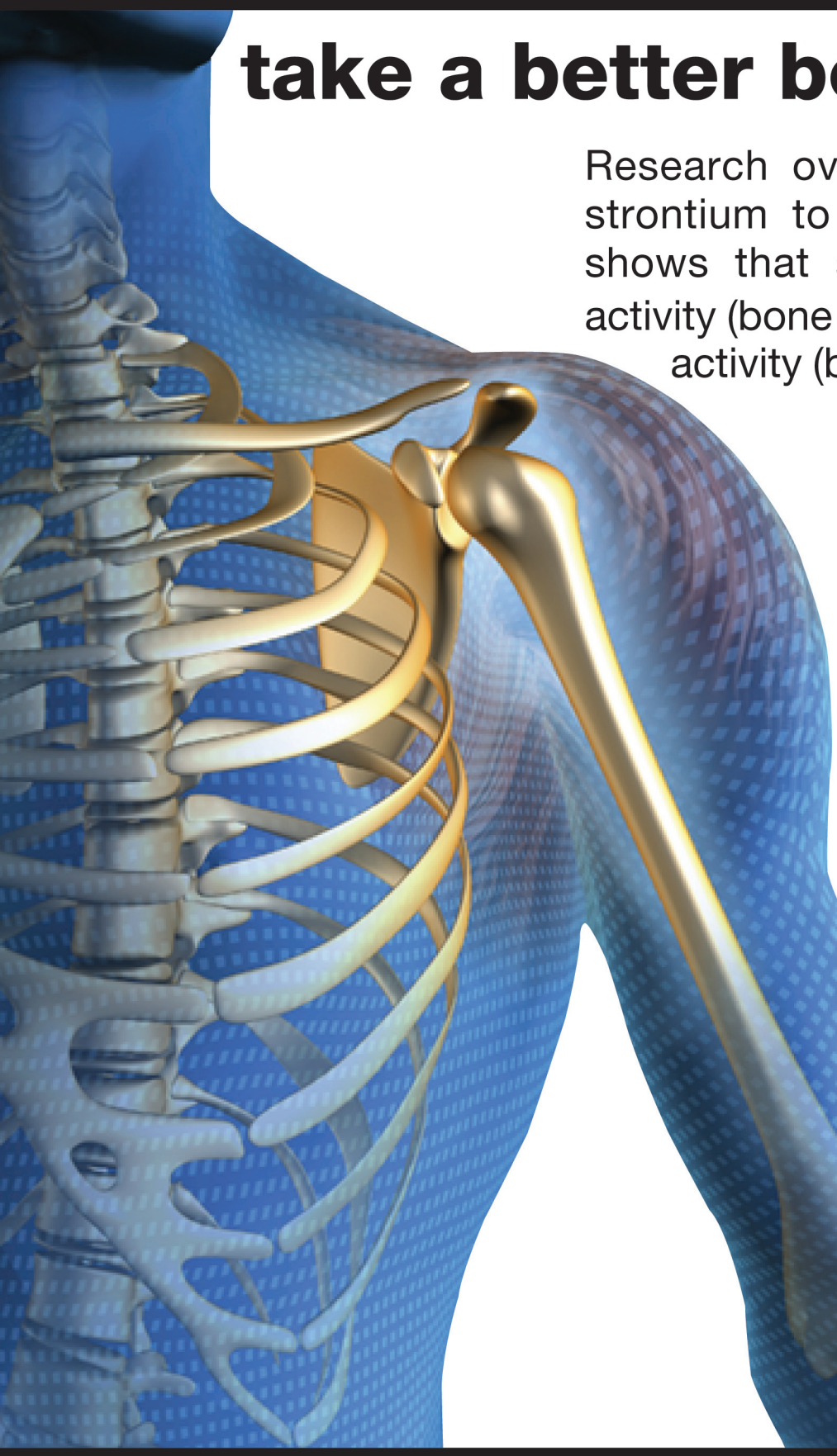

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